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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 KATHMANDU 000067

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USAID FOR ANE/AA GORDON WEST AND JIM BEVER
MANILA FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA
LONDON FOR POL/GURNEY
TREASURY FOR GENERAL COUNSEL/DAUFHAUSER AND DAS JZARATE
TREASURY ALSO FOR OFAC/RNEWCOMB AND TASK FORCE ON TERRORIST
FINANCING
JUSTICE FOR OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY ATTORNEY GENERAL/DLAUFMAN
NSC FOR MILLARD
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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON NEPAL'S MAOIST INSURGENCY, JANUARY 3-9,
2004

REFERENCE: KATHMANDU 0064

SUMMARY

1. Sixteen security personnel reportedly were killed and forty others injured by Maoist ambushes while nine insurgents died in clashes. Maoists reportedly torched a vehicle carrying vials of polio vaccine which was to be distributed to children in the villages. The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) announced that it was suspending some of its food-for-work programs in the far-west due to Maoist looting. Maoist cadres proudly posed for pictures holding an American M-16 rifle seized from the Royal Nepal Army (RNA) after an ambush. Sixteen Maoist cadres surrendered to government officials. Maoists reportedly killed four civilians, two of their own cadres, and abducted fourteen others, including three soldiers. Indian Ambassador to Nepal Shyam Saran said that India, the UK and the US "are on the same wavelength" regarding the conflict in Nepal. The number of Nepalis migrating into India continues to rise. Maoist supremo Prachanda dismissed the recent series of meetings between political parties and the Royal Palace as a mere "ploy" to weaken the movement against the so-called royal regression. Thousands of Nepalis are benefiting from mobile camps providing government services. According to security officials, residents overwhelmingly support the Unified Command Force (UCF) posts. Maoist-called strikes yielded mixed results in the east. The insurgents are campaigning for autonomous rule on behalf of the Magar community, an ethnic group they claim remains oppressed. End Summary.

AMBUSHES KILL AND INJURE SCORES OF SECURITY PERSONNEL

2. Maoist ambushes killed sixteen security personnel and injured forty others. A Royal Nepal Army (RNA) soldier died on January 8 from Maoist-planted landmine in the western district of Salyan. On January 7, rebels reportedly killed a policeman in broad daylight in the far-eastern district of Morang. The insurgents had abducted the junior officer on January 6. On that same day, a clash in Sindhuli District, also in the east, left one officer and one soldier dead. A security convoy, returning from a government sponsored mobile camp in the eastern district of Khotang, was attacked by Maoists on January 6, killing two RNA soldiers and injuring fourteen others. Rebels reportedly also abducted from the convoy three soldiers and three civilians, who remain missing. In Chitwan District, southwest of Kathmandu, a Maoist-detonated landmine killed three RNA soldiers and injured eighteen on January 4. Eight civilians suffered injuries in the ensuing battle between the RNA and Maoists. Also on that day, in the eastern district of Bara, another convoy returning from a mobile service camp came under attack from Maoists. Five soldiers were injured in that ambush. On January 3, in the central-western district of Gulmi, rebels reportedly killed an off-duty, unarmed RNA soldier. On January 2, three policemen were killed in Bara and Sindhupalchowk districts. On January 1, in the eastern district of Kavre, insurgents killed a police head constable.

3. Nine Maoist rebels were killed in separate clashes with security forces. Two insurgents were killed on January 8 in Nuwakot, northwest of Kathmandu, and on January 7, three more in the northeastern district of Taplejung and one in Sindhuli District. On January 4, more clashes in Nuwakot District claimed the lives of two insurgents. A female insurgent was killed on January 2 in Bara District.
MAOISTS DESTROY POLIO VACCINES

14. On January 5, in Chitwan, Maoists reportedly torched a vehicle carrying vials of polio vaccine, which was to be distributed to children in the villages. Two armed rebels seized the vehicle and poured kerosene on it. Twenty-five vials of the vaccine and thousands of syringes were destroyed.

15. On January 2, the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) announced that it was suspending its food-for-work program in the far-western district of Bajura due to the Maoist looting of supplies. Representatives of the program denounced the looting as "immoral and unacceptable," and voiced concern over the increasing number of similar incidents. The organization appealed for the return of the food so that it could be distributed to the community. The WFP had planned to distribute 400 tons of food through the program.

16. On January 7, a group of Maoists in the western district of Bara reportedly also torched five trucks full of construction supplies. In Rupandehi District, also in the west, rebels bombed the state run Radio Nepal station and set fire to the Agriculture Development Training Office.

MAOISTS SEIZE M-16S

17. Maoist cadres proudly posed for pictures holding an American M-16 rifle which they had seized from the RNA after an ambush. The January 2 edition of a weekly English newspaper printed the pictures, and quoted army officials admitting that some of the American rifles had been taken during Maoist ambushes. However, army sources claimed the rebels do not have the proper ammunition for the weapons. The GON's amnesty program offers 700 USD to Maoists who surrender and hand over M-16s.

18. Sixteen Maoist cadres surrendered to government officials. On January 7, the Defense Ministry reported that nine cadres, including six females, surrendered to authorities in Nuwakot District, just north of Kathmandu. On January 4, the Defense Ministry said five insurgents from Sindhuli and one from Dailekh surrendered out of "disillusionment with Maoist terrorism," and their "irresponsible and inhumane activities." Another one surrendered on January 2 in the far-western district of Kailali.

MAOIST MURDERS AND ABDUCTION

19. Maoists reportedly hacked to death a retired Indian soldier on January 8 for refusing to pay the insurgents' earlier extortion demands. The rebels dragged him from his home in Baglung District and killed him in front of family members. On that same day, the rebels reportedly killed two of their own cadres in Rupandehi District, accusing them of betraying the party. On January 4, an armed group of Maoists reportedly shot and killed two employees of the District Forest office in Rautahat District, which borders India on the south. On that same day in central Myagdi District, rebels reportedly killed a man for allegedly posing as a Maoist and robbing people.

110. Maoists reportedly abducted eight people. Two members of the Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) were abducted by rebels on January 3 in Syangja District. Three laborers were abducted in Banke District on January 4, and three family members from Ramechhap District were abducted by insurgents on January 2.

US, UK AND INDIA "ON SAME WAVELENGTH"

111. In a January interview with a vernacular newspaper, Indian Ambassador to Nepal Shyam Saran said that India, the UK and the US "are on the same wavelength" regarding the conflict in Nepal. Saran also declared that India was not worried about a big American presence in Nepal because the needs of Nepal can be supplied by sources other than India. Ambassador Saran again denied allegations that India was a safe haven for Maoists, declaring that Maoists who cross the border into India are not coming with Indian approval. Declaring that Nepal's Maoist problem "is also that of India," Saran said India must be prepared for a mass exodus of Nepalis into India if the insurgency continues unabated.

112. A January 7 press report said that on average 300 Nepalis leave for India everyday due to mounting violence and lack of employment. According to one police post along the India-Nepal border in western Banke District, almost 10,000 people have fled to Nepal in the last three months, most of whom are from the hilly and western regions.

PRACHANDA BLASTS "PLOY"

113. In a statement released on January 7, Maoist Supremo Prachanda dismissed the recent series of meetings between political parties and the Royal Palace as a mere "ploy" to weaken the movements against the so-called royal regression. He dismissed the King's efforts, and declared that they would not solve the country's problems. Prachanda also voiced his support for the ongoing student protests in Kathmandu (reftel).

MOBILE CAMPS HELP TO FILL VOID

114. In an attempt to provide administrative and health services to regions hit hardest by the Maoist insurgency, the Government of Nepal's (GON) mobile camps have proven highly successful. Camps held in Parbat, Bardiya, and Bara have provided administrative, medical, agricultural, and educational assistance to over fifty thousand people, many of whom defied Maoist orders not to attend the camps.

LOCALS WELCOME UNIFIED COMMAND FORCE

115. According to security officials, residents in Jhapa District, which borders India in the east, overwhelmingly support the Unified Command Force (UCF) posts in that district. One local was quoted as saying that the UCF has "boosted our morale," and decreased depredations by Maoists and Indian dacoits.

MAOIST-CALLED STRIKES YIELD MIXED RESULTS

116. A strike called by the Maoist-aligned student wing, All Nepal National Independent Students' Union-Revolutionary (ANNISU-R), on January 3 to protest alleged American intervention and killings of ANNISU-R cadres by security forces yielded mixed results and some violence. Over six districts in the eastern region of Nepal were affected by the strike. In Sankhuwasabha, Maoists torched the Nepal Red Cross Building, but most other activities carried on normally. In Taplejung and Jhapa, stores remained open despite the detonation of a bomb in Jhapa. Sunsari, Morang and Dhankuta reportedly were highly affected by the strike, with streets deserted and shops closed. The strike also caused the postponement of a polio vaccine clinic that was to have been held in Dhankuta. A bomb blast in Dhankuta frightened many into observing the Maoist-imposed shut-down.

117. A two-day strike which began on January 1 paralyzed life in the districts of Nuwakot, Dhading and Rasuwa, which surround Kathmandu. Transportation stopped, schools closed, and businesses remained shut. The strike was called by the Maoists to protest the killing of one of their cadres.

MAOISTS TOUT ETHNIC AUTONOMY

118. Maoist cadres in Pyuthan District, immediately north of the Maoist stronghold of Dang in the west, continue their party's push for ethnic autonomy. The insurgents are campaigning on behalf of the Magar community, an ethnic group they claim remains oppressed. The insurgents reportedly are also planning to hold elections for a new "Peoples' Government" in the near future.

MALINOWSKI